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Annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination for 2007/08

Summary

The present report provides an overview of major developments in inter-agency cooperation within the framework of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), during the period covering its fall session 2007 and its spring session 2008.

During the reporting period, the review of the CEB structure and working methods came to a close. A significant outcome of the review was the integration of the United Nations Development Group into the CEB framework as a third pillar of the Board, alongside its two standing subsidiary bodies, the High-Level Committee on Management and the High-Level Committee on Programmes. The CEB spring session 2008 was the first meeting under the new structure. Overall, innovations introduced as a result of the review are expected to strengthen the role of the Board and make its functioning more efficient.

Climate change featured high on the CEB programme agenda during the period. The Board undertook to prepare the United Nations system's contribution to the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007. It thereafter proceeded to identify key focus areas and modalities for coordinated work in response to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiating process and in pursuance of the broader mandates and capacities entrusted to the system. The Board also agreed on a United Nations system strategy to help developing countries confront the emerging global food crisis and continued its consideration of United Nations system support for Africa's development. Two significant outputs, prepared under the auspices of the CEB High-Level Committee on Programmes, were the publications *Toolkit for Mainstreaming*

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Employment and Decent Work and *Trade Capacity-Building: Inter-Agency Resource Guide*. Recurring programme items on the Board's agenda during the reporting period were its consideration of the United Nations system action plan for the further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries during the period 2007-2010; aid-for-trade; UN-Energy, UN-Water and UN-Oceans; and the rights of persons with disabilities. Two new items on the Board's agenda were peacebuilding and disaster risk reduction.

The CEB review of management issues during the relevant period focused on enhanced coherence in the working modalities of member organizations. An action plan for the harmonization of business practices in the United Nations system was elaborated upon. The Board also reviewed the increased safety and security risks faced by United Nations system staff worldwide. As part of its continuous efforts at advancing accountability and transparency in the United Nations system, CEB further took up the issue of the sharing of information contained in internal audit reports. The Board also dedicated considerable effort to strengthening its relationship and improving cooperation with other inter-agency mechanisms of the United Nations system, such as the International Civil Service Commission, the representatives of internal audit services of the United Nations system and the Joint Inspection Unit. Other important management achievements during the period under review include the following: (a) the integration of the procurement network into the High-Level Committee on Management framework; (b) the establishment of a legal network; and (c) the provision of support to the "delivering as one" pilot projects.

On operational issues, CEB took note of initial results and remaining challenges concerning the delivering as one pilot projects. A critical lesson was that government leadership and involvement is key to ensuring that the United Nations system is aligned with national priorities. United Nations country teams were actively exploring how the system could respond to those priorities through joint analysis, joint thinking and joint prioritization and planning.

CEB also addressed several cross-cutting issues during the 2007/08 period. The Board released a statement whereby executive heads committed their organizations to moving towards climate neutrality at Headquarters and at the United Nations centres for facility operations and travel. CEB further endorsed a proposal by the United Nations Evaluation Group establishing the substantive parameters and process for an independent evaluation of the eight delivering as one pilot projects. The Board was, moreover, actively engaged in the consultative process to prepare the 2007 triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development.

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I. Introduction

1. The 2007/08 reporting period marked several important events that have contributed to the continuous efforts of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) to further coordination and cooperation among United Nations system organizations on a wide range of programme, management and operational issues. The increasingly vocal calls from the international community for a more effective, coherent and better performing United Nations elevated the Chief Executives Board to new prominence in intergovernmental debates. With a view to strengthening the role and functioning of the Board, the review of CEB itself, which had been initiated at the request of the Secretary-General in 2006, was also completed during the reporting period.

2. A major outcome of the Chief Executives Board review was the integration of the United Nations Development Group into the CEB structure. The United Nations Development Group thereby became the third pillar of the CEB structure, alongside its two standing subsidiary bodies, the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) and the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP). The Board held its first meeting under the new structure on 28 and 29 April 2008 in Bern, Switzerland. The integration of the United Nations Development Group into the CEB framework ensures the alignment of country-level operations with the strategic directions and priorities pursued at the programme level, while at the same time providing the mechanisms to strengthen coordination at the country level and incorporating feedback from country-level cooperation into programme and management processes at the Headquarters level.

3. The CEB review has also enhanced the decision-making capacity delegated to the Board's three pillars, which will facilitate and accelerate the decision-making process of executive heads at formal CEB sessions. With the results of the review now in place, the Board is better poised to make a strong and timely contribution to addressing global issues confronting the international community — from food security to the impact of climate change — that demand a strong and coherent response by United Nations system organizations.

4. The role of the Chief Executives Board has, during the reporting period, featured more prominently in intergovernmental deliberations than has been the case in the past. The Board, for example, cooperated in developing a common United Nations system contribution to the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Bali, Indonesia, from 3 to 14 December 2007. The Board's work also formed the basis for the Secretary-General's overview report that was submitted to the thematic debate on climate change in the General Assembly in February 2008.

5. General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development provides a comprehensive framework for Member States to provide policy guidance to United Nations system development cooperation activities. The resolution also places considerable emphasis on the role of the Board in ensuring system-wide coherence, effectiveness and efficiency. However, as has frequently been stressed in the informal consultations on system-wide coherence during the sixty-first and sixty-second sessions of the Assembly, coherence is only a means to the end of ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in delivery of assistance to those that need it the most. On the basis of the belief that increased coherence in the working modalities of

United Nations system member organizations can contribute significantly to the delivery of such results, CEB, therefore, further elaborated proposals to harmonize business practices in the United Nations system.

6. During the reporting period the Board also welcomed the appointment of Thomas Stelzer, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, as the new Secretary of the CEB.

II. Programme issues

7. While Chief Executives Board considered a number of substantive programme issues during the reporting period, the issues of climate change and support to development in Africa featured high on the Board's agenda. The nature and scope of those issues require that they be addressed through a coordinated and sustained effort that CEB is well positioned to provide. CEB also initiated consideration of the multifaceted challenges presented by the rising international prices of basic food commodities that have threatened the advances made towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. The Board agreed on a United Nations system common approach to help developing countries confront the emerging global food crisis.

8. Through its High-Level Committee on Programmes, the Board further considered several programme issues of system-wide importance. The Board noted that two recent outputs — *Toolkit for Mainstreaming Employment and Decent Work* and *Trade Capacity-Building: Inter-Agency Resource Guide*, which were produced under its auspices — were practical publications that could serve as models for the United Nations system's efforts in other areas as well. Recurring items on the High-Level Committee on Programmes' agenda during the reporting period were its consideration of the United Nations system action plan for the further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries during the period 2007-2010; aid-for-trade; the achievements of UN-Energy, UN-Water and UN-Oceans; and the rights of persons with disabilities. Two new items on the agenda were those of peacebuilding and disaster risk reduction.

9. In continuation of its previous practice, CEB also addressed several issues with both programme and management implications through joint efforts by the High-Level Committee on Programmes and the High-Level Committee on Management. The Board's considerations of those cross-cutting issues are covered in the final section of the present report.

A. Climate change

10. At the request of the Secretary-General, the Chief Executives Board, through the High-Level Committee on Programmes, undertook to prepare the United Nations system's contribution to the meeting of the Conference of the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007. The resulting paper entitled "Coordinated United Nations system action on climate change" outlined key areas where the United Nations system could work together in response to the outcome of intergovernmental discussions and was

presented by the Secretary-General to the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change[1] gathered in Bali.

11. In January 2008, pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 62/8, the Secretary-General submitted a report entitled "Overview of United Nations activities in relation to climate change" (A/62/644). The CEB Bali paper is contained in annex II of that report. An inventory of United Nations system activities on climate change, prepared under the auspices of the Board, was distributed as supplement to the Secretary-General's report at the thematic debate on climate change held by the Assembly from 11 to 13 February 2008. Views expressed by Member States during the debate were subsequently taken into account in the consideration by the HLCP, together with the decisions reached in Bali and the recommendations of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat on how the system could contribute to the implementation of the Bali Action Plan.

12. The High-Level Committee on Programmes identified five areas of focus for United Nations system activity in response to the negotiation process under the Convention and in pursuance of the broader mandates and capacities in the United Nations system. Those areas, which were subsequently endorsed by CEB at its 2008 spring session were (a) adaptation; (b) technology transfer; (c) capacity-building; (d) reduction of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation; and (e) mitigation/finance. The areas had been selected to respond to the needs of the negotiating process, most recently expressed at the climate change talks held in Bangkok from 31 March to 4 April 2008. To support country-level work in the focus areas and other sectors of United Nations activity the United Nations Development Group was also brought in, as a pillar of CEB and working in tandem with the High-Level Committee on Programmes. Moreover, it was decided, in order to support the exchange of information, transparency, engagement and the tracking of results, to have the aforementioned inventory of United Nations system activities evolve into a living web-based tool that would also be available to Member States.

13. Work is continuing within the CEB framework on elaborating a coordination approach as a contribution to the forthcoming climate change conference/ Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Poznan, Poland, in December 2008. The Board considers it essential to be responsive to the evolution of the intergovernmental discussion, while at the same time offering proactive approaches in key emerging areas. The United Nations system will continue to leverage its strengths in line with the mandates it receives from Member States to respond to the multifaceted challenges of climate change within the broader context of sustainable development.

14. The Board has agreed that the coordinating mechanism to take forward its work on climate change will remain light and flexible. Decisions regarding facilitation of the aforementioned five areas of focus will be made on the basis of expressed commitments by participating organizations. Coordination on key issues will further be strengthened through existing mechanisms, such as UN-Energy, UN-Water and UN-Oceans, and special efforts will be made to respond to immediate challenges. Current mechanisms to support country and regional level work will be used to provide countries with the services and capacity that they require.

[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1771, No. 30822.

B. Africa

15. CEB continued its consideration of African development and the multidisciplinary response required from the United Nations system given the interdependent nature of the development process in Africa. Board considerations focused on the need for clarity with respect to the various initiatives in the United Nations system on Africa. The Board was of the view that the approach the system was taking should be articulated clearly to Member States and to African Governments in particular.

16. Emerging challenges that had an impact on United Nations system efforts in support of African development were (a) the dramatic increase in food prices that underscored the need to raise agricultural productivity and find additional resources to fight malnutrition and hunger; (b) the slowing world economy that may strain donor efforts to mobilize development finance; and (c) the need for more rapid progress in the Doha Development Round of trade negotiations to improve market access for developing countries. The United Nations system could, however, with increased assistance and strong African leadership, assist African Governments to ensure that the Millennium Development Goals are translated from hope to reality in Africa.

17. CEB members, in that regard, welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative in launching the Millennium Development Goal Africa Steering Group and the Millennium Development Goal Africa Working Group and pledged their support for the process. The Secretary-General stressed that the groups should not duplicate the work of existing coordination mechanisms such as the Chief Executives Board and the United Nations Development Group, but should focus on gaps in day-to-day operational collaboration between United Nations system organizations and international financial institutions.

18. The Millennium Development Goal Africa Steering Group and the Millennium Development Goal Africa Working Group were launched to galvanize support for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed goals in Africa. They brought together senior leadership of key international financial institutions, the United Nations system and multilateral and regional organizations. Seven thematic groups were established to carry the work forward as follows: (a) agriculture and food security; (b) education; (c) health; (d) infrastructure and trade facilitation; (e) national statistical systems; (f) aid predictability; and (g) improved country-level collaboration. CEB members have a critical role to play in the initiative and in the thematic groups relevant to their work, including leading the thematic groups.

C. Other programme matters

1. Employment toolkit

19. The Chief Executives Board reviewed the progress in the implementation of the *Toolkit for Mainstreaming Employment and Decent Work*, which was prepared under the leadership of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in close collaboration with all CEB members and was endorsed by the Board at its 2007 spring session. CEB member organizations were in the process of undertaking self-assessments of the employment and decent work outcomes of their policies,

programmes and activities. A knowledge-sharing interactive web platform for collecting the relevant tools, knowledge and best practices of the entire system was also released. A CD-ROM and an explanatory video, as well as the presentations of the toolkit at various international events and meetings, generated widespread interest, including among Governments, non-governmental organizations, parliamentarians and local authorities.

20. The toolkit was simultaneously being adapted for application by United Nations country teams at the field level and tested in three of the eight United Nations pilot countries (Mozambique, United Republic of Tanzania and Viet Nam)[2] as well as in Egypt. Given the importance of national ownership of the employment toolkit knowledge base, it was being translated into Arabic, Chinese, French and Spanish.

2. United Nations system action plan for the further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries during the period 2007-2010

21. The Chief Executives Board followed up on its decision, at its fall session 2006, that United Nations system organizations would redouble their efforts to accelerate the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action in their respective fields of competence. In revisiting that issue, the Board decided (a) to endorse the United Nations system action plan for the further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries during the period 2007-2010; (b) to recommend the further implementation of the United Nations system action plan for the further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries during the period 2007-2010 within the existing mandates, programmes and resources; and (c) to request the United Nations system organizations to include information on the implementation of the United Nations system action plan for the further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries during the period 2007-2010 in their annual reports.

3. Aid for trade

22. The Board considered the contribution that it could make to the aid-for-trade agenda. The Board was of the view that the United Nations system could help to facilitate the mainstreaming of aid-for-trade into national development strategies, given the work of the United Nations system in trade and its presence on the ground. The Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), at the CEB session of April 2007, suggested creating a CEB cluster on trade and productive capacity. Subsequently UNCTAD, in collaboration with other interested CEB members, proceeded to conceptualize the idea to form a trade and productive capacity cluster as an inter-agency trade capacity delivery vehicle under the "One United Nations" pilot country initiative and other country-level programmes and plans.

[2] The eight countries participating in the "delivering as one" pilot project are Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay and Viet Nam.

4. Peacebuilding

23. The Board was informed of the implications of the integrated peacebuilding strategies for the United Nations system with the purpose of initiating consideration of how to develop better modalities for United Nations system engagement in the work of the Peacebuilding Commission. The main purpose of the Peacebuilding Commission was to bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources, and to advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery. The Commission was also mandated to provide recommendations and information to improve the coordination of actors within and outside the United Nations. The Secretary-General's Policy Committee had further requested the Peacebuilding Support Office to initiate a discussion among United Nations partners to determine the process of applying the integrated peacebuilding strategy in countries under consideration by the Commission, and to explore the potential of using it as a tool more generally for countries not on the Commission's agenda.

24. CEB focused on how the United Nations system could best backstop the new function, drawing on lessons learned from Burundi and Sierra Leone. Member organization representatives expressed support for the ongoing efforts and reaffirmed their commitment to the inclusive element of coordination introduced through the peacebuilding process.

5. Disaster reduction

25. The Board considered the issue of mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into United Nations development policies and practices following a request from the Secretary-General for CEB to take up the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action: 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters. In that context, the importance of a coherent United Nations system approach in helping countries to reduce the risk of disasters and in integrating disaster risk considerations into sustainable development strategies was stressed.

26. CEB noted that the Hyogo Framework for Action, adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in January 2005, had the following three strategic goals: (a) to integrate disaster risk reduction into sustainable development policies and planning; (b) to strengthen institutions, mechanisms and capacities to build resilience to hazards; and (c) to systematically incorporate disaster risk reduction into emergency preparedness, response and recovery programmes. CEB took note that the General Assembly had given the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction the tasks of acting as the focal point in the United Nations system for the coordination of disaster reduction and of ensuring synergies among the disaster reduction activities of the United Nations system and regional organizations and activities in the socio-economic and humanitarian fields, and that as such, the secretariat supported the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

27. CEB agreed to request that the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction facilitate the development of a mainstreaming policy, including programme coherence, for disaster risk reduction throughout the United Nations system, and to report back to it on progress made. The Board also stressed the importance of building on the existing work of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction in disaster risk reduction in developing a United Nations climate change strategy and,

for international collaboration on disaster risk reduction, of avoiding creating new mechanisms that would overlap with the Hyogo Framework of Action.

6. Rights of persons with disabilities

28. The Chief Executives Board reviewed recent developments concerning the rights of person with disabilities in the light of the adoption by the General Assembly, in its resolution 61/106 of 13 December 2006, of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto. Given the wide scope of the Convention, including measures to protect and promote human rights through social development, one of the most challenging aspects of its implementation was the coordination of actors, policies and programmes. To ensure that there were no gaps in the implementation of the Convention, it was important to secure the support of the full United Nations system. In order to address that danger, CEB mandated the time-bound inter-agency support group that it had established to prepare a system-wide strategy in support of the implementation of the Convention.

7. UN-Energy, UN-Water and UN-Oceans

29. CEB reviewed the progress in the work of UN-Energy, UN-Water and UN-Oceans. UN-Energy had established a family of practitioners across the system, produced five publications, and had become poised to play a major role in United Nations system issues management. UN-Energy's efforts had contributed to the recognition that energy was a fundamental component in any discussion of economic integration, sustainable development and climate change. The impact of UN-Water's coordination efforts at the country level was, in turn, having positive spin-off effects on the coordination of local government agencies as well as on the coordination of donors in terms of funding and investments within the country. Chief among UN-Oceans achievements was the United Nations Atlas of the Oceans, a web-based information system on oceans and marine development and management issues.

30. CEB also endorsed the nomination of Kandeh Yumkella, Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), to assume the chairmanship of UN-Energy for the biennium 2008-2009, with Olav Kjorven of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as Vice-Chairman.

8. Trade capacity-building

31. The Chief Executives Board considered the issue of trade capacity-building in the context of *Trade Capacity-Building: Inter-Agency Resource Guide*, a publication that was developed by the High-Level Committee on Programmes task force on economic development under the leadership of UNIDO. The guide is available online at the following URL: http://www.unido.org/en/doc/86537. It is intended for the use of government officials in identifying the relevant services that could be provided by the United Nations system and for consultation by Resident Coordinators during the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process.

D. Emerging issues on the Chief Executives Board agenda

32. The Board reviewed the emerging global food price challenge and agreed on a common strategy in support of developing country governance to confront the crisis. CEB was of the view that the multifaceted challenge needed to be addressed in the short, medium and long term. The United Nations system would, in the short to medium term, cooperate in crisis response, development of emergency safety nets and social protection for the most vulnerable, and on rapid employment and income-generation programmes. The United Nations system would further fully deploy its capacity in the monitoring, quick assessment and analysis of the rapidly evolving food price trends and their impact on vulnerability to support the response of affected national Governments. In the medium to long term the United Nations system would bring together its technical and analytical capabilities to fill in research and knowledge gaps in order to support Governments with the best information for agricultural decision-making to boost production and productivity.

33. The Board further underscored the urgent necessity to address the structural and policy issues that have substantially contributed to the crisis and the challenge posed by climate change to productive systems.

34. In a statement released following its April 2008 meeting, the Board called upon the international community to urgently and fully fund the emergency requirements of 755 million dollars for the World Food Programme (WFP) and to deliver on its pledges and provide maximum flexibility to target the most urgent needs. The Board also called for countries that have imposed export restrictions on food, reducing supplies and contributing to price hikes, to urgently reconsider those policies. CEB also urged that the Doha Development Round reach a rapid conclusion, resulting in a scaling-down of trade-distorting subsidies that have damaged the production capacity of developing countries.

35. To create a prioritized plan of action and coordinate its implementation, the Board further decided to establish a task force on the global food crisis under the leadership of the Secretary-General that would bring together the heads of the specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as relevant parts of the Secretariat.

III. Management issues

36. The Board's consideration of management issues during the period 2007/08 focused on enhanced coherence in the working modalities of member organizations. Inspired by the ongoing deliberations on system-wide coherence, which highlighted the key role that improved business practices could play in the United Nations system's ability to deliver better results, a plan of action for the harmonization of business practices in the United Nations system was elaborated under the auspices of the High-Level Committee on Management.

37. The Board also reviewed the increased safety and security risks faced by United Nations system staff and the sharing of information contained in internal audit reports as part of its continuous efforts at advancing accountability and transparency in the United Nations system. The Board further strengthened its relationship and improved its cooperation with other inter-agency mechanisms of the United Nations system.

38. Through the authority delegated to the High-Level Committee on Management and its networks, other important achievements during the period under review include the following: (a) the integration of the procurement network into the High-Level Committee on Management framework in recognition of the increasing importance and complexity of management and coordination issues related to procurement and, more broadly, to the supply chain; (b) the establishment of a legal network with the objective of improving system-wide coherence in the provision of legal services; and (c) the provision of support to the delivering as one pilot projects on various human resources-related issues.

A. Business practices

39. In line with the increasing demands from the international community for efficient and coherent United Nations system operations, the Secretary-General has made the pursuit of effective, transparent and harmonized administrative and management procedures one of his priorities since taking office. The Board's endorsement of the High-Level Committee on Management initiative to develop a plan of action for the harmonization of business practices in the United Nations system is a concrete step in the advancement of that objective.

40. Driven by the strong belief that increased coherence in the working modalities of United Nations system member organizations can contribute significantly to their ability to deliver better "programmatic" results, work was undertaken during the reporting period to elaborate a package of proposals to harmonize business practices in the United Nations system. The development of the proposals and the assessment of priorities were guided by the aim of achieving efficiencies and promoting the delivering as one concept at the country level. A guiding principle in the development of the plan was also the awareness that any process aiming at achieving coherence within the United Nations system needs to be inclusive, take into account previous recommendations made by the internal and external oversight bodies of member organizations and be previously endorsed by their governing bodies.

41. The proposals address a number of key areas, covering all the major management functions of United Nations system organizations. The main thrust of the initiatives in the human resources area is to build a more coherent United Nations system that will emanate from an increased consistency in performance evaluation systems, employment arrangements and procedures. It will be a system in which staff are more mobile, are rewarded for good performance and not only for seniority and are motivated and trained with a renewed investment in training and career development programmes that allow them to maintain and upgrade the appropriate professional skills. In the area of financial management, the planned adoption by United Nations system organizations of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) by 2010 has been unanimously praised as an important basis for simplifying and harmonizing business practices. In addition to IPSAS, related initiatives include the establishment of common cost recovery policies across United Nations system organizations, a feasibility study for putting in place common treasury services and the completion of a comparative analysis of organizations financial regulations and rules, leading to an action plan for system-wide harmonization. Most projects in the information and communications technology area address the need for a common and coherent effort to enhance

knowledge sharing. Initiatives in that area aim at increased harmonization through the identification and sharing of best practices within the main Enterprise Resource Planning platforms; examine the potential value of common technology services, in particular data centres and data communications; and provide for the development of standardized knowledge-sharing practices and a common communications platform for an improved and consistent image for the United Nations system. Initiatives in the area of procurement aim at creating cohesive approaches and at improving the quality of procurement procedures and processes in United Nations system organizations. Those efforts would include sustainable procurement interventions, the development of guidelines and training materials for practitioners and suppliers, and initiatives to increase the access of suppliers from developing countries and countries in economic transition. Ultimately, all those efforts combined would positively enhance the professionalism of United Nations system procurement practitioners. The plan of action will also evolve to include projects that have not yet been developed, such as the creation of an independent system-wide capacity for evaluation and initiatives that would be proposed by the legal network.

42. The scope of the plan is limited to functions and processes for which the executive heads have responsibility. Many of the proposed projects incorporate deliberate efforts to enhance knowledge sharing, both internally, across functional borders, and externally, across organizations. Taken together, the proposed activities represent a new level of commitment by the organizations of the United Nations system for a realignment and harmonization of business practices to respond to the new political demand for a coherent and effective United Nations system.

43. The action plan for the implementation of the harmonization of business practices initiative in the United Nations system will serve as a reference framework for the High-Level Committee on Management's programme of work for the next biennium. It is intended that working groups of interested organizations will be formed around a lead agency for each of the suggested projects. Expected outcomes from the individual projects include the following: (a) adopting international standards and replication of best practices; (b) facilitating knowledge and resource sharing; (c) enhancing transparency and accountability; (d) enhancing public trust and engaging stakeholders; (e) facilitating effective inter-agency coordination; and (f) achieving efficiency gains.

B. Security and safety of staff

44. CEB reviewed the general security environment in which the staff of the United Nations system were currently operating and the nature and relevance of emerging threats. The Board issued a statement expressing serious concern over the recent number of violent attacks against humanitarian workers and United Nations staff operating in various regions of the world. It called upon all Member States to renew their commitment to the protection of humanitarian workers and to ensure safe and unhindered access to all people in need, in keeping with international law and humanitarian principles.

45. The Board was of the view that the security and safety of the staff of United Nations system organizations should be treated as one of the highest priorities, and that the issue required urgent attention and commitment. Staff security and safety

should be assessed within comprehensive risk management frameworks, providing for the different types of risks linked to the variety of mandates of United Nations system organizations, as current and future security challenges are not and will not be solely linked to terrorism and criminality, but also to conflict situations, to diseases and to an increasing number of natural and man-made disasters, including those resulting from climate change. Security-related assessments and analyses should, therefore, also account for sociological and cultural variables. A critical underpinning for the safety and security of United Nations system staff is the principle that the United Nations system should project itself as an impartial actor to facilitate conflict resolution, both from a substantive and from an external communication perspective, without prejudice to its duty to pronounce itself on violations of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

46. The Board considered a number of recommendations on operational security issues that the High-Level Committee on Management had elaborated upon in collaboration with the Inter-Agency Security Management Network. The Board agreed on the urgency to take action to strengthen security for all United Nations staff and premises and stressed that security is not an issue that can be left only with security officials but needs to be an integrated part of planning, implementing and monitoring programme delivery. The Committee recommendations, as endorsed by CEB, were transmitted to the Independent Panel on Safety and Security of United Nations Personnel and Premises, to which the Secretary-General had appointed Lakhdar Brahimi as chair. The nature and scope of the recommendations are, therefore, subject to review pending the outcome of the Independent Panel.

C. Internal audit reports

47. The Board considered issues related to the disclosure of information contained in internal audit reports of United Nations system organizations in the light of the expectation of the international community that the system should be as accountable and as transparent as possible. The Board stressed that it was important for any disclosure policy to incorporate adequate criteria to ensure that the human and legal rights of the staff were respected, especially in connection with information contained in internal audit reports that have to do with investigations. Board members also recognized that governing bodies should be able to adopt disclosure policies consistent with the need, for example, to preserve the confidentiality of industrial secrets or other highly sensitive information contained in internal audit reports. The Board, therefore, endorsed the adoption of disclosure policies, respecting the management prerogatives of executive heads and subject to conditions and criteria to be defined within the context of an organizational policy and which should not be applied retrospectively.

D. Enhanced cooperation with inter-agency bodies

48. CEB dedicated considerable effort to strengthening its relationship and improving cooperation with other inter-agency mechanisms of the United Nations system, such as the International Civil Service Commission, the representatives of internal audit services of the United Nations system and the Joint Inspection Unit. With regard to internal audit services, the High-Level Committee on Management approved the conceptual framework and modus operandi of a partnership

arrangement with the representatives of internal audit services, recognizing the mutual benefit of working together to promote coherent, efficient and cost-effective oversight and management of the organizations of the United Nations system.

49. Responding to a call from the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-seventh session for closer cooperation between the Board and the International Civil Service Commission, the High-Level Committee on Management also engaged in active consultations with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Commission. CEB was informed of the outcome of the ICSC review of its functioning and mechanisms. The Commission's strategy and vision highlighted its commitment to change and to seeking new ways to form strategic partnerships with the organizations of the common United Nations system. The Board expressed appreciation for the ICSC outreach strategy and welcomed the initiative to strengthen the Commission's relationship and improve its cooperation with CEB and United Nations system organizations.

IV. Operational issues

50. The CEB session in Bern, Switzerland, on 28-29 April 2008 marked the first Board meeting with the United Nations Development Group formally reporting as part of the CEB structure. The Board acknowledged with appreciation the progress that had been made in operationalizing the integration of the Group as a third pillar of the CEB framework.

51. The United Nations Development Group mechanism had been significantly streamlined. The Group, further, consulted regularly with the two other CEB pillars — the High-Level Committee on Management and the High-Level Committee on Programmes — to ensure a clear division of labour. A secondment from the United Nations Development Group Office to the CEB secretariat had also been realized to facilitate cooperation between the three pillars and the integration of the Group into the Chief Executives Board. The Office will be known in the future as the Development Operations Coordination Office to better reflect its dual function, serving as technical support unit to the Group as well as supporting country-level coordination through the Resident Coordinator system.

52. Another important component of the restructuring of the United Nations Development Group was the establishment of an advisory group on country operations, which would be a broadly representative group. The leadership of the Group would, furthermore, include a Vice-Chair, at the Assistant Secretary-General or Assistant Director-General level, from one of the United Nations specialized agencies.

53. CEB also took note of the United Nations Development Group's ongoing work. With almost 18 months having passed since the launch of the delivering as one pilots, initial results and remaining challenges had now been extensively documented in government reports to the Deputy Secretary-General and in United Nations country team stocktaking reports.[3] A critical lesson from those efforts was that government leadership and involvement is key to ensuring that the United Nations system is aligned with national priorities. An encouraging outcome was the greater engagement of non-resident agencies, both in the programming process and

[3] See also section VI.B on evaluation.

in the resulting programmes. The issue of joint programming was another key gain emerging from the pilots. United Nations country teams were actively exploring how the system could respond to national priorities through joint analysis, joint thinking and joint prioritization and planning.

54. As for the way forward, the United Nations Development Group would focus on facilitating the application of the lessons learned from the pilots to other countries as relevant, but especially in countries where Governments are requesting more coherent and aligned United Nations programming, and in countries beginning a new United Nations Development Assistance Framework programme. The work of the Group would continue along the framework of the triennial comprehensive policy review, which provides a solid intergovernmental mandate for the work to be carried out at the country level.

V. Year-long United Nations system-wide human rights advocacy campaign

55. The Chief Executives Board considered a proposal for an initiative, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, for a year-long United Nations system-wide human rights advocacy campaign to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[4] The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights requested that United Nations organizations situate their own work within the scope of the Declaration and offered the assistance of her office to CEB members in developing their own celebrations and commemorations over the year, to demonstrate that the United Nations was embracing a human rights vision. The initiative was warmly welcomed by the Board.

VI. Cross-cutting issues

A. A climate-neutral United Nations

56. On World Environment Day, 5 June 2007, the Secretary-General pledged to explore ways of making the United Nations more climate-friendly and environmentally sustainable and to develop a climate-neutral approach to its premises and operations. The Environment Management Group, under the leadership of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), was, in line with that commitment, given the task of carrying out a study of how best to proceed with making the United Nations climate neutral.

57. During the Board's consideration of the issue, the importance of the United Nations system leading by example was noted, and it was underlined that the climate-neutral United Nations initiative was both symbolically important and administratively possible. Following a review of the Environment Management Group's report entitled "Strategy for a climate-neutral United Nations", the Board released a statement whereby executive heads committed their organizations to moving towards climate neutrality at Headquarters and at the United Nations centres for facility operations and travel.

[4] General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

58. In particular, executive heads committed their organizations to completion of the following by the end of 2009: (a) estimating their greenhouse gas emissions consistent with accepted international standards; (b) undertaking efforts to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions to the extent possible; and (c) analysing the cost implications and exploring budgetary modalities, including consulting with governing bodies as needed, of purchasing carbon offsets to eventually reach climate neutrality.

B. Evaluation

59. At its 2007 spring session, the Chief Executives Board endorsed the recommendation for an evaluation of the eight pilot projects carried out at the country level under the One United Nations initiative and gave the United Nations Evaluation Group the task of establishing the substantive parameters and process for the evaluation. In response to that request, the United Nations Evaluation Group envisaged a three-stage process, as follows: (a) an assessment of the evaluability of the delivering as one initiative by May 2008; (b) a process evaluation to be completed by September 2009; and (c) an evaluation of results and impacts of the pilot experiences by 2011. CEB supported the proposed scope and process for the evaluation, but asked the United Nations Evaluation Group to review its timeline with an aim to issuing the evaluation of the results and impacts of the pilot experience by 2010.

60. CEB also agreed on the need to obtain a quick indication, by the end of 2007, of how the One United Nations pilot projects were functioning through a stocktaking exercise by the eight concerned Governments and country teams. CEB members, therefore, welcomed the initiative of the Deputy Secretary-General, who was working on a stocktaking exercise with the Chairman of the United Nations Development Group and the group of 10 organizations that were overseeing the pilot projects. The eight Governments had, in that regard, been asked for initial information on the anticipated benefits and impact on national ownership. The information provided would complement feedback from the country teams. That quick assessment or stocktaking of the process would further provide input to the intergovernmental debate in the General Assembly on system-wide coherence and to the United Nations system, complementing the rigorous evaluation process proposed by the United Nations Evaluation Group.

C. Triennial comprehensive policy review

61. CEB member organizations were actively engaged in the consultative process to prepare the 2007 triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations development system. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs prepared two reports of the Secretary-General to facilitate deliberations by Member States: (a) an analytical report on the implementation of resolution 59/250 (A/62/73-E/2007/52); and (b) a report with conclusions and recommendations (A/62/253). The extensive consultations with United Nations system organizations undertaken during the writing of those reports resulted in products that were shared by the entire United Nations system.

62. In addition, the directors of the CEB secretariat and the United Nations Development Group Office briefed representatives of the Member States during the triennial comprehensive policy review negotiation process in the fall of 2007. The representatives welcomed the briefings, which assisted them in developing recommendations relating to the CEB, as contained in General Assembly resolution 62/208.

63. The resolution encouraged the Secretary-General, through the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the United Nations Development Group, to make efforts to enhance the coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations development system. Its management recommendations contain many links to the plan of action for the harmonization of business practices as described above. To follow up on its implementation, paragraph 141 of resolution 62/208 requested the Secretary-General, after consultation with the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, to submit a report to the Economic and Social Council, at its substantive session of 2008, on an appropriate management process, containing clear guidelines, targets, benchmarks and time frames for the full implementation of the resolution, that defined results to be achieved through the implementation of the resolution in a format that would allow for adequate monitoring and evaluation of those results, and interdepartmental and inter-agency measures that needed to be set in motion, for the implementation of the resolution. To ensure joint approaches with respect to the implementation of the resolution 62/208, CEB member organizations complied with that request by actively contributing to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs's management report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, which would be submitted to the Economic and Social Council in July 2008.

D. Work methods of the Chief Executives Board

64. As a result of the CEB review and the integration of the United Nations Development Group into the CEB structure, a process of consultations to ensure an alignment of the work programmes and respective responsibilities of the three CEB pillars — the High-Level Committee on Management, the High-Level Committee on Programmes and the United Nations Development Group — was also begun during the reporting period. A review of the procedures and working methods of the Committees, a consideration of methods for improving the functioning of the CEB meetings themselves and the setting of the CEB agenda were also undertaken. In addition, the secretariats of the CEB and the Secretary-General's Policy Committee, the main mechanism to support decision-making by the Secretary-General on issues of strategic importance to the Organization, meet regularly to coordinate their respective agendas.

VII. Conclusions

65. The period 2007/08 has seen significant progress in enhancing the role and functioning of the CEB as an effective coordinating mechanism of the United Nations system. The review of the CEB that was completed during the reporting

period served to consolidate the key coordination functions of operational activities at the country level, that is, the harmonization of management functions and programme coordination under an integrated structure, enabling a comprehensive approach towards United Nations system-wide coordination. The enhanced authority delegated to the three CEB pillars further facilitated an accelerated decision-making process during formal CEB sessions and allowed executive heads extended time to focus on deliberations of a policy character.

66. CEB took action on a number of substantive issues during the reporting period. They ranged from the harmonization of business practices in the United Nations to facilitate the system's ability to deliver better results, to developing a common United Nations system position towards climate change. The Board also agreed on a United Nations system strategy to help developing countries confront the emerging global food crisis in the context, in particular, of system-wide activities for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and poverty alleviation. The Board's efforts to further all these issues are expected to continue in the period ahead.

67. The executive heads of United Nations system organizations remain committed to furthering coherent approaches to system-wide themes, building on the mandate provided to them by their respective governing bodies to assist Member States in achieving concrete results in the implementation of intergovernmental mandates.